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MRS. MARY DOWNEY AND SON, WILLIAM
Back After Visiting Son Imprisoned in Red China
Journal-American Photo by Charles Carson

Mrs. Downey Doubts Reds Will Free Son

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A weary Mrs. Mary Downey returned today from a trip to Red China, where she visited a son imprisoned on spy charges.

"I hope it won't be necessary to have to go back to visit him again in prison," she said after alighting from a jet airliner at Idlewild airport.

However, when she was asked whether she felt her 30-year-old son John might be freed, Mrs. Downey replied:

CONFLICTING STORY
"I was given no indication that my son might be released."

She said she had tried to see some of the Chinese officials but didn't.

Her comments seemingly conflicted with news reports yesterday that she was

quoted as saying at a Hong-Kong news conference that Peiping authorities hinted at eventual release of her son for good behavior, though possibly not for some years yet.

Mrs. Downey, a schoolteacher who lives in New Britain, Conn., spent 10 hours with her son during the course of five visits. She said she found him in apparent good health and spirits.

Downey has been held in prison eight years on a life sentence. A U. S. Army civilian employe, he was captured in 1952 when an Air Force plane crashed while taking him from Japan to Korea.